

Stepan Bandera, alias Melnyk

Stepan BANDERA was born in 1909 in the town of Prostyanec, near Stryj. His father was a Greek Catholic priest. He attended elementary school in Sokol and high school in Stryj. While still in high school he became a member of UVO, a veterans' organization of Ukrainian nationalists from the First World War. In 1926 or 1929 he graduated from high school and went on to the Polytechnic in Lvov where he studied agriculture. In 1929 he did not attend the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists in Vienna which brought about the consolidation of UVO and three other minor nationalist groups. OUN was born at this Congress. By late 1932 or early 1933 BANDERA had become head of the Homeland executive committee of the OUN. KONOVALETS was the overall Chief of OUN at this time, although he was in the emigration. This was the period in Eastern Poland (1929-1934) when the younger generation of Ukrainian students took over most of the prominent positions in the homeland OUN. In June 1934, one day after the assassination of the Polish Minister of Interior, Pieracki, BANDERA was arrested. He was first sentenced to death and then the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. His trial took place in 1935 after which he was committed to the Holy Cross jail where he remained until 1939. It is alleged that his sentence was commuted to avoid an uprising of Ukrainian nationalists in eastern Poland and the Ukraine. BANDERA's closest collaborators during this period were Yaroslav STETSKO, Mykola LEBED, Michailo YAHIV, and Yaroslav HROLYK. The circumstances surrounding BANDERA's escape or release from Polish prison in 1939 are not clearly known. Once free, BANDERA resumed his leadership of OUN in the homeland. Officially Col. Andrei HRYNNYK had succeeded to the title held by KONOVALETS until the latter's assassination. HRYNNYK, however, was in the emigration and BANDERA in Cracow. BANDERA was offered a position in HRYNNYK's emigre Provod of the OUN (OUN). This offer BANDERA turned down since it would have placed him in a position subordinate to HRYNNYK. In early summer 1940 the OUN split and BANDERA became the overall chief of the greater part of the organization. During 1940 OUN organized those western regions occupied by the Germans and sent couriers and organizers into the eastern Ukraine. When the Germans attacked Russia, many members of the OUN followed the Germans' advance eastward. BANDERA remained in Cracow. The Gestapo invited BANDERA for a conference which apparently was a ruse to arrest him. At any rate, BANDERA was taken to Berlin and placed under house arrest there. He was shortly transferred to the Prinz Albrechtstrasse Gestapo jail reserved for important political prisoners. (Volodymyr STACHIV, now a member of the ZP UNR, was also in this jail at the same time as BANDERA.) In 1942 BANDERA was transferred to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. In 1944 he was brought to Berlin where the Germans attempted to negotiate with him. BANDERA was however adamant and the negotiations came to nothing. Allegedly he based his refusal to collaborate with the Germans on the fact that the Germans had dissolved the independent Ukrainian government proclaimed at Lvov in June 1941. Partly through the intervention of LEBED and HRYNNYK, BANDERA escaped from the Germans and disappeared. At the end of the war he was in the Austrian Tyrol. In the summer of 1945 he came to Southern Bavaria where he has since or less been to this time.

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In 1939 BANDERAS married. His family is at Q. Libo in Germany. He is said to have three or possibly by now four children.

Former friends of BANDERAS characterize him as follows: self-important, clever, fond of jokes, socially very cordial, unintellectual, mediocre as an orator, and preoccupied with problems of power politics in the emigration.

A breakdown of BANDERAS' official titles would run something as follows:

1932-39 Chief of the homeland executive of OUB
1939-August 1943 - Providnik (Leader) of ODE and chairman of
the Provid.
1943-45 unofficially Providnik
1945-51 Providnik of the foreign elements of ODE (ZCh)

It will be noted that BANDERAS has never held any official title or membership in ODE or the UNRRA. His claim to membership in the "Council of Three" (Buro Providu) has been refuted by the Homeland on the grounds that the Buro Providu ceased to exist in 1946, after the death of two of its original members (KLYVNY and VOLKOV). It should also be noted that the title Providnik ODE officially went out of existence in 1943, when it was decided that all policy matters concerning the party would henceforth be decided by a council of equals (the Provid) instead of by a single leader. The evolution of the Ukrainian underground in the last five years in the direction of decentralization of executive power has not been fully accepted by BANDERAS who has shown unmistakable evidence that he desires to return to the status quo of 1941 when he held the unchallenged position of "Führer".